NO. 470

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,

BEIRUT, SYRIA

JUN 6 - 1930

SUBJECT: Rumors of disturbances on the Turco-Syrian frontier.

1—1221

File

FOR DISTRIBUTION — Yes No

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUN 21 1930
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

File

INDEX BUREAU
767.90d/15

I have the honor to inform the Department that there have been rumors here recently of disturbances on the Turco-Syrian frontier in the "bec de canard" area and that French troops have been sent to the area. According to these rumors skirmishes have taken place between the Turkish and Syrian forces on the frontier, the Turks being excited because of the supposed settlement by the French of Armenians along the frontier who will eventually be formed into a buffer state in northern Syria. One local newspaper, while denying any basis for Turkish fears, says that the British have allotted large tracts of land in northern Irak for the settlement of Kurdish tribes and that the Turks believe that the British and French are acting in concert in thus establishing elements hostile to them along their southern frontier. It has also been rumored that the population in the "bec de canard" area object to the presence of the Armenian refugees who have been settled in the vicinity, as they fear that the district will become Armenian.

FILED
JUN 28 1930

In

In investigating these rumors I have ascertained that a French force, consisting of five hundred troops, was despatched last week to the "bec de canard" area. I was informed by a member of the High Commission that the troops were sent to assist in the formal taking over of the frontier as determined by the Franco-Turkish treaty and to prevent any disturbance that might occur among the border populations which now become Syrian. My informant said that the French had recently observed a movement of Turkish troops along the border and were puzzled by it but learned eventually that the troops were proceeding to Kurdistan. My Turkish colleague here has suggested to me that the rumors that the Syrian and Turkish frontier forces have engaged in attacks upon each other have arisen from the fact that they are cooperating in putting down banditry along the border and that they sometimes carry the pursuit into each other's territory. He went on to say that he knew of such occasions either from his own Government or from the High Commission, from which statement it might be deduced that the two governments are exchanging protests against the invasion of each other's territory. However, the French High Commissioner visited the "bec de canard" area a few days ago and it is unlikely that there is any important disturbance there at the present moment.

The subject of the creation of an Armenian state in northern Syria has recently engaged the attention of a part of the local press but I may briefly state that

there

there is no indication, so far as I can see at the present moment, of any such intention on the part of the French. I hope to be able soon to report to the Department more at length on the matter.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

Geo L Brandt

George L.Brandt,
American Consul.

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NOTE

767.90d

SEE 890d.401/5 FOR #132

FROM Beirut (Keeley) DATED Feb.20, 1931

XXXX NAME 1—1172 ore

767.90D/16

REGARDING: the disfavor with which Turkey looks upon the settlement of its traditional enemies, the Kurds and Armenians, along its southern frontier.

dew

NO. 132

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL
BEIRUT, SYRIA/

FEB 20 1931

CONFIDENTIAL

SUBJECT: Racial affinities of the people taken into Syria by the frontier changes in the north.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to report as follows in reference to the informal comments of the Near Eastern Division on despatch No. 470 of June 4, 1930, requesting information as to the racial affinities of the people taken into Syria by the frontier changes in northern Syria.

According to a well informed French official, many villages taken into Syria by the northern frontier changes were uninhabited when the French troops took over the area from the Turks, but an influx of settlers into the deserted villages began almost immediately thereafter and has steadily continued, until at the present time all the villages are repopulated. This immigration is thought to have come largely from villages on the Turkish side of the frontier, many of which, it is reported, have decreased in size or have been entirely deserted. This same official tells me that during a visit to Mosul prior to the rectification of the Northern frontier the Kurds of Iraq, dissatisfied with

Arab

Arab rule, inquired with interest as to French intentions in respect to the Haut Djesiret or Bec de Canard area. It is thought, therefore, that some of the Kurdish influx into this area since the French occupation has come from Mosul, as well as from Turkey.

Although my official informant said that the High Commission itself is not in possession of accurate data as to the present population of the territory ceded to Syria by the frontier changes or as to the racial affinities of its inhabitants, he was inclined to accept as fairly accurate for the present the following percentages based upon information which I obtained from my Turkish Colleague: about 70% Kurds, 15% Syrian Arabs, 10% Turks, and 5% Armenians, mostly Kurdish speaking, who have come from Turkey during the past year. It is not thought that the population of this territory or of the Haut Djesiret as a whole will become sufficiently stabilised for another two years to permit of an accurate census being taken, particularly as effect is only about to be given to the terms of the Protocol of March 17, 1930, between France and Turkey permitting the inhabitants of the territories affected by the frontier changes to opt for Syrian or Turkish nationality and to fix their future domicile in accordance with their decision.

Although Armenian families are being settled along the frontier and farther to the south along the Euphrates, there seems to be little justification for believing that the French have any thought of creating an Armenian state, as such, in Northern Syria. In fact, the policy of

developing

developing this region appears to be intended as much to leaven the mixture by encouraging the Syrian Arabs to establish villages there as to take care of the refugees from abroad. A number of mushroom towns have sprung up all through this area, and old sites have become greatly enlarged. Hassetché, for instance, which a few years back was a small village of a couple dozen houses is now understood to comprise several thousand inhabitants.

The settlement in principle of the frontier question with Turkey seems to have inspired confidence in the future possibilities of this area, and if developments there continue as at present this region bids well to become an important producing and trading center, as well as a center of political interest. In reference to the latter possibility, I may say that I have learned confidentially from my Turkish Colleague that Turkey does not look with favor upon the settlement of its traditional enemies along its southern frontier. Although he maintains that the aims of his government are entirely pacific and that Turkey has no desire to regain its lost territories now under French and British mandate, he points out that one cannot foresee what the future may call forth and that should Turkey ever decide to invade Syria, an eventuality against which he feels the Mandatory Authorities may be attempting to guard by settling the Kurds and Armenians along the frontier as a buffer population, these elements could be crushed without perceptibly stemming the Turkish advance, with the sole result that another slaughter of Kurds and Armenians would be added to the already

regrettable

regrettable total of such incidents credited to Turkey but the primary responsibility for which, as in this instance, he states may be traced to the Machiavellian politics of the western powers.

Naturally the immigration of Kurds and Armenians into Syria presents to the Mandatory Authorities a problem that is not easy of satisfactory solution. I am inclined to believe that the French do not welcome this immigration and that in deflecting it into the Haut Djezireh and Euphrates region they are motivated more by a desire to prevent further concentration of refugees in the city camps, where they breed communism and disease, than by any wish to use them as a buffer against the Turks.

The Department may rest assured that I will continue to follow and report any developments of interest.

Respectfully yours,

J.M. Keeley, Jr.,
American Consul.

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JMK

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NOTE

SEE 890d.9111/29 FOR Report #-

FROM Beirut (Goold) DATED Feb. 13, 1932

TO NAME 1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Endeavors of the Turks to acquire certain territories in Asia Minor and in the Levant States under French Mandate.

las

767.90D/17

767.90d

The Turkish Peril

The "Orient", in its issue of January 20th, published an account of the endeavors of the Turks to acquire certain territories in Asia Minor, and more precisely in the Levant States under French Mandate, and cited excerpts of an article appearing in an Egyptian paper under the signature of Emir Chekib Arslane, an Anti-French Syrian leader. "A secret accord", relates Emir Arslane, "is said to have been concluded

767.90d

concluded by Italy and Turkey relative to territorial acquision in Asia Minor. According to the terms of this accord, Turkey would consent to abandon to Italy the zones of Aleppo, Antioch and Alexandretta, keeping to herself the States of the Alaouites, the Vilayet of Damascus and the Greater Lebanon." Commenting on this news, Emir Chekib states that, "whether or not this information is ture, it would remind us once more that the Turks are ready to "jump" at the first opportunity to Syrian territory in order to annex to their possessions the zones of Alexandretta, Antioch and Aleppo". (To abandon them to the Italians?).

The "Orient" then proceeds to expose the views of a well-informed French official concerning the intentions of Turkey towards the Syrian territories, which would tend to give weight to the allegations described above, and asks the following question of Solh, Djabri, Hanano, Mardam, Atassi, and the other enthusiastic Nationalist leaders who advocate a policy of an absolute independence of their country and an immediate evacuation of Syria by French troops:

> "Suppose the Nationalists' dream of absolute and immediate independence is realized, and admitting that the French troops entirely evacuate the Syrian territory, by what military or diplomatic means would Nationalists be able to defend their country or safeguard their independence and sovereignty against a possible Turkish invasion? If the Turks were allowed to step into the Syrian territories, do Nationalists believe that they would ever abandon that vast stretch of fertile land of northern Syria which produces abundant quantities of wheat and cotton, provides pasturage for such a large number of cattle and furnishes enormous quantities of wool? The sovereignty and independence of Syria (Arabic or non-Arabic) would simply mean a "mouthful" to the greedy Turks, and those insisting on the immediate evacuation of Syria by the French would have only gained the substitution of a "Kemalist" occupation to a French Mandate. Such a perspective is not, of course, extremely delightful, and

less

less delightful it would be for the Moslem and other communities menaced by Turkish laicization. Damascus and Aleppo, the cities of Islam, would do well to consider this matter, and if they wish to avoid any worse situation, the best "Nationalism" would still be to fight for the maintenance of the French Mandate".

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 751.67/75 FOR Despatch #6102

FROM France (Marriner) DATED Nov.23,1932

TO NAME 1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Relations- Turjey and Syria. Summary of supplementary agreement as it appeared in LE JOURNAL of November 20th reached October 27th between France and Turkey in regard to railway system in latter country with Syria.

767.90D/18

fp

No. 3102 Paris, November 23, 1932

Subject: Franco-Turkish Railway Agreement

The Honorable

The Secretary of State

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to recall that according to Article X of the agreement signed at Ankara on October 20, 1921, between M. Franklin-Bouillon, on behalf of France, and Youssouf Kémal Bey, on behalf of Turkey, it was provided as follows:

> "The Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey agrees to the transfer of the concession of the section of the Baghdad Railway between Bozanti and Nisibin as well as of the several branches constructed in the vilayet of Adana to a French group nominated by the French Government, with all the rights, privileges and advantages attached to the concessions, particularly as regards working and traffic.

"Turkey . . .

"Turkey shall have the right to transport troops by railway from Meidan-Ekbes to Choban-bey in Syrian territory and Syria shall have the right to transport troops by railway from Choban-bey to Nisibin in Turkish territory.

"In principle no differential tariff shall be levied over this section and these branches. However, should a case arise, the two Governments reserve the right to examine by mutual agreement any departure from this rule which may become necessary.

"Failing agreement, each Party will resume its liberty of action."

On October 27 of the present year, a supplementary agreement was reached between France and Turkey with regard to the railway system in the latter country and Syria. A summary of the supplementary agreement as it appeared in LE JOURNAL of November 20, 1932, is attached.

According to LE JOURNAL, there is also maintained the understanding relative to military transport by rail across the territory of the other, contained in the Convention of Friendship and Good Neighborly Relations between France and Turkey, signed at Ankara on May 30, 1926. The pertinent article of this convention is Article XI which reads:

"As regards railway transport on the Bozanti-Nisibin line, the High Contracting Parties hereby decide to apply immediately the provisions of Protocol No. IV annexed to the present Convention, for civil transport, and those of Protocol No. V, also annexed to the present Convention, for military transport."

For the more complete understanding of the purport of Article XI, the Department may care to refer to the annexed Protocol No. IV regarding civil transport by the Bozanti-Nisibin railway, and to Proto-

col . . .

col No. V concerning military transport by that railway.

Respectfully yours,
(signed) THEODORE MARRINER

Theodore Marriner
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Enclosure:

1. Translation of excerpt from LE JOURNAL, Nov. 20, 1932.

In quintuplicate

877

HLW/hfe
Copy to E.I.C.

TRANSLATION

WHAT IS THE IMPORT OF THE FRANCO-TURKISH AGREEMENTS?

LE JOURNAL, November 20, 1932.

The most important prescription is the exploitation of a railway system interesting Turkey and Syria.

The Franco-Turkish agreements of October 27th have been made public. One of them, relating to the exchange of property, only concerns the parties to the agreement. This is not the case with the other accord, relative to the railways, although this be merely an episode in the agitated history of the Bagdad system. When it is hoped to ward off great difficulties and prepare future advantages, a transition is important.

First of all it must be distinctly understood that the agreement concerns solely the exploitation of the Turkish and Syrian systems. The future destiny of the Bagdad Company, with its capital, shares and bonds, has nothing to do with an arrangement which simply aims at transforming the temporary regime existing since 1921.

To find the origin of this matter, one must go back to Article 10 of the Franklin-Bouillon agreement of 1921. By Article 10, Turkey recognized the taking over by a French company of the exploitation of that part of the Bagdad line comprised between the gap of the Taurus to Bozanti and the present terminus, Nisibin. In reality, the part comprised between Bozanti

and...

and Adana has never been taken back. The French company has had to occupy itself with a system which is almost entirely in Turkish territory since the Syrian parts consist solely of: 1) A section of 14 kilometres of the branch line Alexandrette-Payas-Topa-Kaleh; 2) the V loop which the line forms in Syrian territory in order to reach Aleppo.

Even on the 400 kilometres where the line constitutes the Turco-Syrian frontier between Tchoban-Bey and Nissibine, the road-bed is in Turkish territory. One can understand that the Turks desired a change of regime, which regime, moreover - from the time that repurchase by the Turks of the Anatolian system had cut off the Mersina-Adana section, which was the most profitable - had no longer much interest for us. The best thing, therefore, was to negotiate like good friends.

The agreement was prepared by our Ambassador, M. de Chambrun. The purely Syrian parts will return to a French company; all the Turkish parts will be exploited by a Turkish company with French capital. Only the section from Adana to Sewzi-Pacha will go back to Turkey within six months. The Turks are keen on this as they have a line from Sewzi-Pacha to Diarbékir under construction.

We spoke of a regime of transition. In point of fact, the experiment which will commence within a year may be interrupted in four years' time, although, in theory, the faculty of repurchase is suspended for fifteen years. One will not wait so long to settle the final destiny of the Bagdad system.

(Signed) SAINT BRICE.

Details

DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENTS.

To the information given in the above article, one must add that the facilities granted to either of the two countries by the Ankara agreement of May 30, 1926, to effect military transports by rail across the territory of the other are maintained. Turkey and Syria have renounced their right to these facilities for a period of fifteen years, to be reckoned from the date of signature, and (unless during this period there is an agreement made fixing the definitive regime of this change) also their right of repurchase without a preliminary agreement. However, the Turkish Government reserves the faculty to use the right of repurchase in respect to the sections situated west of Meidan-Ekbes, from the fourth year of the taking over of the exploitation by the Turkish company, subject to giving the latter three months' notice.

In the same way, the Turkish company exploiting the Dehoban-Bey-Nisibin section will have the right at any time from the fourth year of its taking over the direction to give up this section provided it gives three months' notice.

The object of the agreement relating to Turkish property and Syrian property in Turkey is the withdrawal of the restrictive measures at present applied in Turkey in regard to buildings belonging to nationals of Syria or Lebanon, and to those belonging to Turkish nationals in Syria.

The following will be permitted to benefit by this agreement:

1) ....

1) Persons who, in conformity with the provisions of the Ankara convention of May 30, 1926, have chosen Syrian or Lebanon nationality;

2) Those who, established on September 30, 1914, in Syria or Lebanon have kept the nationality of these countries by virtue of Article 30 of the Treaty of Lausanne.

3) Persons born in Syria or Lebanon, or whose father was born in Syria or Lebanon, and who had resided in these countries for at least a year at the time of the coming into effect of the Treaty of Lausanne, provided they have acquired Syrian or Lebanon nationality by virtue of Article 30 of the said treaty.

4) Those who have chosen Syrian or Lebanon nationality pursuant to Articles 32 and 34 of the same treaty.

These persons shall be put in possession of their properties or buildings situated in Turkey - which in some cases were seized subsequent to the date of option and in others subsequent to the coming into effect of the Treaty of Lausanne - together with the amount of rental collected by a public administration since the date of seizure.

If the buildings to be thus restituted have been liquidated, or if their restitution is impossible on account of expropriation, incorporation in the national or municipal public domain, or on account of transformation affecting their value, the claimants shall receive the amount of the money value of the building belonging to them on the day that it was seized.

The other provisions of the agreement relate to the determination of the counter-value of the buildings

which...

which cannot be given back, to the times and method of payment of the sums thus fixed, to the procedure established for the presentation of claims, and to the means of recourse open to the persons concerned.

JM

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ankara, March 30, 1935.

No. 594

Subject: Visit of M. de Martel, French High Commissioner to Syria, to Ankara.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
APR 25 1935
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

MAY 8 1935
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767.90D/19

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to inform the Department that M. de Martel, French High Commissioner for Syria, arrived in Ankara on March 27. An account of the results of his visit to Ankara is given below in the form of a translation of an official communiqué, which was issued by the Turkish Government.

"Le Comte

"Le Comte de Martel, French Ambassador and High Commissioner of the Republic of France in Syria and the Lebanon, has had interviews with the President of the Council of Ministers of Turkey, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Ministers of the Interior, Justice, National Economy, Customs and Monopolies on questions of interest to the two countries. The French Ambassador to Turkey took part in these conversations.

"The following questions were the subject of discussion:

"1. Boundaries and boundary relations.

"2. Railway communications.

"3. Commercial exchanges.

"4. Agreement on the welfare of Syrians in Turkey and Turks in Syria.

"5. The question of options.

"6. Financial matters.

"7. Mixed stations.

"The exchange of views took place in an atmosphere of perfect collaboration and with great cordiality by reason of the friendly relations which exist between France and Turkey and the good neighborly relations which bind Turkey with the states of the Levant under French mandate.

"The Minister for Foreign Affairs, having recalled the special administrative régime existing in the region of Alexandretta which concerns the particular status of the inhabitants of the area who belong to the Turkish race, M. de Martel assured him that France intends to preserve the autonomy of the sanjak of Alexandretta and confirmed the existing agreements between the two Governments on this subject.

"The High Commissioner and the Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed to reaffirm the intangible and inviolable character of the frontier between the two countries.

"It was decided that the permanent boundary commission should hold its next meeting on June 17, 1935, at Damascus.

"Among other decisions involving the peace of the frontier zones, it was decided that all those guilty of crimes committed in these zones as well as all those guilty of crimes committed outside of the zones and who might seek refuge therein will be turned

over

over to the respective authorities without the formalities of extradition.

"A complete similarity of views was existent in all of the questions which were the objects of the conversations."

M. de Martel was also received by M. Kemâl Atatürk, President of the Republic. The interview is reported to have lasted for more than an hour. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the French Ambassador were also present at this interview.

M. de Martel discussed with M. Gabriel Couteaux, the Nansen office representative of the League of Nations in Turkey, the possibility of Syria permitting the immigration of some or all of the 190 undesirable White Russians now in Turkey. This question is discussed in the Embassy's despatch No. 591 of March 28, 1935, entitled "The Situation of Russian Refugees in Turkey."

861.48 Refugees 67/132

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner

700/715/840.1
FEF/g

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.900/2070

SEE 867.00/3027 FOR #812

FROM Turkey (Skinner) DATED Oct.24, 1935

TO NAME 1—1127

REGARDING:

Plot against the life of the President of Turkey.

Report on -.Names of some of the persons involved.

Wi

No.812 Istanbul, Turkey, October 24, 1933.

Subject: Plot Against the Life of the President of the Republic.

767.90h

867.00/3820

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

The discovery of a plot against the life of the President of the Republic, Mr. Kamal Atatürk, was announced in Turkey on October 18th. For a month previous, rumors were in circulation that such a plot had been uncovered, and when the facts were communicated to the public, it was admitted that the news had been withheld for a time in order that the preliminary investigation might not be impeded in any way. According to the information at present available a group of five people headed by one Yahya, armed with guns and bombs, succeeded in crossing the Turco-Syrian

frontier

frontier near Kilis, penetrating as far as the district of Anderin where the leader of the band, Yahya, was denounced and arrested, the remaining four escaping in all probability back into Syrian territory.

The preliminary inquiry disclosed that the object of the band was to assassinate the President of the Turkish Republic and that the participants in the undertaking were armed and equipped by the well known Circassian irregular leader, Ethem, and his brother Resit, who are now residents of Arabia. It is hinted that the first information about the plot came from British secret service sources. The two men named, although siding with the Nationalists during the initial phase of the Kemalist movement in Anatolia, later joined the forces of opposition and finally fled from Turkey. It appears, furthermore, that the leader of the band was provided with a letter from Ethem to the Deputy Ali Saip, one of the prominent members of the Grand National Assembly who owns a farm in the proximity of the Turco-Syrian frontier and who, according to the instructions issued by Ethem to the leader of the band, was to direct their movements after their arrival in Turkey.

The case has been turned over for further inquiry to a special commission composed of the Governor of Ankara, the Director of Public Safety, and the Under Secretary of the Interior. At present the matter is entirely in the hands of the judiciary. At the request of the competent examining magistrate who has been carrying on the preliminary examination of the case, the

Grand

Grand National Assembly on October 18th deprived the Deputy Ali Saip of legislative immunity and he was promptly arrested. Immediately before his arrest this Deputy made a moving address to the Grand National Assembly disclaiming any connection whatever with the plot, pointing out that his public and private life had been of such character as to make it unreasonable to suppose that he could have any object whatever in joining in the movement, and protesting his personal devotion to Mr. Atatürk. To do the Deputy justice, nobody thus far has been able to discover anything in his past which would seem to warrant the supposition that he had joined with the conspirators. We shall have to wait for the conclusion of further proceedings in the hope that this mysterious aspect of the matter can be cleared away satisfactorily.

Twelve persons are now under arrest in Ankara on the charge of implication in the plot. Their trial is announced to begin shortly before the Criminal Court at Ankara and the Deputy Ali Saip undoubtedly will be the most conspicuous figure in the trial. He played a prominent part during the Kemalist movement, at first as gendarmerie commander in the southern provinces, and later as a member of the Tribunal of Independence charged with the liquidation of the Kurdish revolt in 1925. He has been a Deputy since the first Grand National Assembly.

As to the man Yahya, it appears that he is an inhabitant of the village of Çarşamba, and that some time ago he left Turkey for Syria in order to make a better livelihood.

livelihood. The plotters were denounced by a resident of Anderin, named Uzeyir, formerly a gendarmerie sergeant under Deputy Ali Saip. His house served as the first abode of Yahya and his men and it was he who was to bring them into touch with the Deputy in question.

In connection with this affair there has followed a very active clamor in the press against the alleged negligence of the French authorities in Syria in permitting a plot of this kind to be fomented on Syrian territory. The suggestion is that there are some thousands of Armenians, Circassians, Kurds, and perhaps others who reside in Syria and who entertain feelings antagonistic to the present Government of Turkey, and that the French authorities have been careless to the point of indifference respecting these people and their political activities. Doubtless it must be a matter of extreme difficulty for the Government of Syria to obtain satisfactory information respecting the turbulent or dissatisfied elements in the population, and probably the present emotional state of the Turkish Republic, or rather writers for the Turkish press, accounts for the sharp tone of criticism thus far indulged in. We shall probably hear something more of this aspect of the matter in the near future.

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

RPS:lr

800.1

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 890d.9111/136 FOR Report #-

FROM Beirut (Kelsey) DATED Oct.19, 1936

TO

NAME

1—1127 G P O

REGARDING: Turkish claims to Alexandretta and Antioch.

Press comment on -.

767.90D/121

2

Wi

Turkey and Alexandretta

Al Chabab takes the Turkish press to task over its claims for Alexandretta and Antioch. It denies that the majority of the population of the Sanjak is Turkish and demands that Turkey cease reviving a past which is not quite dead. It is sufficient for Turkey to have taken from Syria the two Arab regions of Mardin and Cilicia, and persistence in a similar policy in regard to Alexandretta would have numerous consequences on Turko-Syrian relations. The new Arab state which has just acquired its independence has a right to expect better understanding on the part of the friendly neighbor republic. Collaboration between the two countries is necessary to raise the prestige of the Orient.[2]

This press campaign and the secret Franco-Turkish negotiations about the Alexandretta region likewise bring comment from the Ahali of Aleppo which holds that the autonomous regime and administration are superabundantly guaranteed by the Convention of Ankara. If Turkish interests have sometimes been harmed, this can easily be remedied, in good faith, in negotiation with a constitutional government.

751.67

1. Translated in Echos de Syrie, Oct. 10
2. Translated in l'Orient, Oct. 6

It

It continues: "But if it is a question, in these new Franco-Turkish negotiations, of the independence of this region which it is wished to realize before the publication of the Franco-Syrian treaty, that is another affair and one which we will not broach until after having learned the results of the Paris negotiations on this subject.[1]

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 890d.9111/153 FOR Report #-

FROM Beirut (Marriner) DATED July 10, 1937
TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Agreement signed May 29, at Ankara between France and Turkey forming an annex to the Alexandretta agreement and concerning Syrian and Turkish nationality and property. Substance of the -.

lec

767.90D/22

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 767.90g/19 FOR #308

FROM Turkey (Washington) DATED July 28, 1937

TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

767.90D/23

REGARDING: Sanjak issue.
Statement by Dr. Aras, Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, which indicated that as far as Turkey and France were concerned the -- was a thing of the past. Dr. Aras counselled the Syrians at Aleppo to adopt the same attitude.

lec

No. 208 Istanbul, July 28, 1937.

Subject: Dr. Aras' Visits to Baghdad and Teheran.

767.90d

767.90d/11

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to inform the Department that Turkey's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tevfik Rüştü Aras, left Ankara on June 19th last for the purpose of paying official visits to Baghdad, Teheran and Moscow. His visit to the first capital was probably occasioned in large measure by Turkey's desire to hasten a solution of outstanding differences between Iraq and Iran, and to the second capital to urge a dispersal of similar Irano-Afghan differences, thus removing the last obstacles to the signature of the Sadoun Pact of Non-Aggression. As reported in the Embassy's despatch No. 200 of July 14, 1937, these tasks were duly accomplished

and

and the Pact was signed during Dr. Aras' visit to Teheran. As his visit to Moscow was undertaken for reasons having no apparent relation to those which prompted his first two calls, it has been dealt with in a separate despatch (No. 310 of July 28, 1937).

Dr. Aras was accompanied as far as Baghdad by Celal Bayar (Minister of Economy), and by an official of the Sümer Bank. Although no definite information is available as to exactly what rôle these latter personages played during the Baghdad visit, rumors are current that they were occupied chiefly in discussing with Iraqi officials problems involving oil production. It would appear, however, as the Iraq Government is not thought to be in a position, because of existing contracts and commitments, to act with complete independence in matters affecting the production or marketing of oil, that these rumors cannot be well founded. It seems more probable that Celal Bey and his banker associate discussed with their Iraqi counterparts, if any such conversations did in fact take place, ways and means of constructing a link to join the Turkish and Iraqi railways - a project announced some months ago as having been approved and agreed upon by both governments. It is of interest in this connection to note that, according to press reports at the time the official announcement was made, the proposed link, apparently by design, will not enter Syrian territory at any point.

After spending several days in Baghdad, Dr. Aras continued his journey to Moscow, via Teheran and the Saadabad Treaty, and Celal Bey and his associate returned to Turkey, having, through their presence, contributed added dignity and

importance to the Turkish delegation, if nothing more.

In discussing the present series of visits, there remains but one further event which seems worthy of note. At Aleppo, while en route from Ankara to Baghdad on June 21, 1937, the Turkish Ministers were welcomed by Turkish sympathisers in the Hatay and were questioned by correspondents of the Syrian press. Dr. Aras profited from the opportunity thus afforded to make a declaration of policy which, by its tone of definiteness and finality, seemed to indicate that as far as Turkey and France were concerned the Sanjak issue was a thing of the past. He counselled the Syrians to adopt the same attitude and to stop their "nonsensical demonstrations", and he promised the Hatayans a "new deal" of the most alluring sort. For once his words were not vague and difficult to interpret, but went straight to the point and were doubtless meant to dispel any doubts which might still linger in Syria as to Turkey's seriousness of purpose in regard to the future of the Sanjak.

Respectfully yours,

S. Walter Washington,
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

Copies sent to American Legation, Baghdad,
American Legation, Teheran, and
American Consulate General, Beirut.

OSO

JLB:mcj-kcs

A TRUE COPY OF THE SIGNED ORIGINAL

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 890d.00/673 FOR Tel. noon

FROM Beirut (Marriner) DATED August 13,1937

TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Riots at Antioch August 10 between Arabs and Turks. Troops restored order and are maintaining it without any damage to property.

lec

767.90D/24

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 890g.00 General Conditions/117 FOR #918

FROM Iraq (Knahenshue) DATED Dec. 23, 1937

TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Tension between Turkey and Syria.
Reports concern expressed in political circles in Baghdad regarding the state of --. Comments upon reasons for Turkey annulling the treaty of bon voisinage.

767.900/25

5. RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND SYRIA

Considerable concern is expressed in political circles in Baghdad regarding the state of tension between Turkey and Syria. We announce in another column that the treaty of bon voisinage between the two countries has been annulled by Turkey. Turkey has taken the attitude that the provisions of the treaty are not consistent with the present state of affairs, and it is suggested that some misunderstandings have arisen through different interpretations of some of the provisions. We understand, however, that the Turkish Government has expressed its willingness to open negotiations for the conclusion of a new treaty with Syria.

--The Iraq Times, December 9, 1937.

6. DELIMITATION OF THE IRAQI - SYRIAN FRONTIER

The boundaries separating Iraq and Syria are not yet totally delimited. One committee has been appointed in Iraq and another in Syria for this purpose. The two will meet in Deir Ez-Zor, as the line of the frontier which is not yet demarcated is situated west of Iraq, adjacent to the Albu Kemal district.

--Al-Istiqlal, December 9, 1937.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.900/26

SEE 890d.01/474 FOR #588

FROM Turkey (Kelley) DATED April 5, 1938
TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

REGARDING:

Relations between Turkey and Syria.

Encloses memorandum of conversation with the Emir Adil Arslan, Syrian nationalist, who commented on -. Proposals made to Turkey for settlement of the Sanjak question.

26

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.90d/27

SEE 767.83/15 FOR #630

FROM Turkey (Kelley) DATED May 6, 1938

TO NAME

1—1127 o.f.o.

REGARDING: Visit to Beirut, Tripoli and Aleppo of the Turkish Foreign Minister on return from Egypt.

Comments on reception given Dr. Aras.

767.90d

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 890d.00/709 FOR Tel. 4 p.m.

FROM Beirut (Palmer) DATED June 14, 1938

NAME

TO

1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Situation in the Sanjak of Alexandretta.

Informs that - has been complicated by friction between the League Commission and Collet, Commander of the Moroccan troops. Commander Hillhouse, British member of Commission who has resigned, states that troops have fired on a crowd in Antioch. Attempted assassination of Jamil Mardan, Syrian Government leader.

767.90d/28

Wi

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 890d.00/720 FOR Tel. 3pm

FROM Beirut (Palmer) DATED June 29,1938
TO NAME 1—1127 GPO

REGARDING: Turkish-Syrian relations as result of the Sanjak situation. Collet, commanding French troops, informed Director of Princeton expedition at Antioch that General Gunduz, Turkish, desires Princeton expedition field headquarters as barracks for Turkish troops. Majority of League Commission members and delegates have left the Sanjak.

767.90D/29

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DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 767.90h 11/1 0 FOR #845

FROM Turkey (MacMurray) DATED Oct. 13,1938

TO NAME

1—1127 •••

767.90D/30

REGARDING: Turkey's friendship with Syria.

During a speech made by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs before the Grand National Assembly he took the occasion to warn the Syrian Government that, despite the friendly feelings of Turkey towards the Syrian people, it was impossible to maintain for a long time a sincere friendship which existed on only one side, and that it was only human that when one Government encouraged manifestations against another the latter should finally become irritated notwithstanding the strength of its friendly feelings.

lec

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ankara, Turkey, December 10, 1938.

No. 893

Subject: Turkish Territorial Aspirations in the Gezira (Djezireh) District of Syria.

767.90D/31

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
MR. DUNN
JAN 20 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JAN 4 1939
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1939 JAN 3 PM 3 33
DIVISION OF

FOR DISTRIBUTION CHECK Yes No
to the Field

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JAN 23 1939

EUROPEAN
JAN 28 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith a memorandum of a conversation in which Mr. A. V. Walker, Manager for the Levant of the Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, communicated to me in strict confidence certain information that had been conveyed to him by a French business associate, and confirmed to him by M. Massigli, a member of the French Foreign Office, with regard to a recent demand of the Turkish Government for "administrative control" in the Gezira (or Djezireh) region of Syria.

Such

FILED
JAN 27 1939

Such a demand - seemingly tantamount to a demand for the cession of Syrian territory - would be so striking a departure from the previous course of Turkish foreign policy that one cannot but query whether action of just that character can have taken place. It is not suggested that there is any reason whatever to doubt the good faith of Mr. Walker or of his informants; but it seems not unlikely that some distortion of meaning has occurred in the process of passing from French into English and from one to another of a series of persons. I am hopeful that, when M. Massigli arrives and takes up his duties as French Ambassador here, it may be possible to obtain from him a fuller and more satisfactory idea of what actually took place.

Respectfully yours,

J. V. A. MacMURRAY.

Enclosure:

1/ - Copy of Memorandum of Conversation dated December 2, 1938.

Copies sent to:
American Embassy, London;
American Embassy, Paris;
American Embassy, Berlin;
American Legation, The Hague;
American Consulate General, Beirut.

863/715

MacM:mej

Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 893 dated December 10, 1938, from the American Embassy at Ankara, Turkey.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL COPY Ankara, December 2, 1938.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Turkish Territorial Aspirations in the Gezira (Djezireh) District of Syria.

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. A. V. Walker, General Manager, Levant Division, Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, Incorporated;

The Ambassador; and

Mr. J. L. Brent, Second Secretary of Embassy.

PLACE AND DATE OF CONVERSATION: American Embassy, Ankara, December 2, 1938, 12:00 Noon.

Mr. Walker called on the Ambassador this morning to inform him that, while passing through Italy recently on a business trip to Egypt, he had been ordered by his Company to proceed instead to Paris. On reaching Paris he had been told by M. Montagu, of the Cie. Française de Pétrôle (the official French company participating along with the Anglo-Persian, the Royal Dutch, the Socony Vacuum and the Standard Oil of New Jersey, in the Iraq Petroleum Company) that the Cie. Française had been informed by the French Foreign Office that during the most crucial period of the recent European crisis (i. e., during the last ten days of September), Turkey had made oral representations to France to the effect that it desired to be placed in "administrative control", with particular reference to the administration of oil resources, over the so-called Gezira District of Syria,

down

down to an east-and-west line drawn just north of the town of Dair-ez-Zor. These oral representations had been followed up by a note, delivered subsequently to the Munich conversations (i. e., early in October), to which the French Government had replied, with the knowledge and acquiescence of the British Government, that it could not entertain any such proposal. The Turkish claim was then dropped; but M. Massigli (then still in the Quai d'Orsay, but already designated as Ambassador to Turkey), whom Mr. Walker had later seen with M. Montagu, and who confirmed these statements, had expressed the feeling of the French Government that the Turkish claim would be renewed, probably early in the coming year. M. Massigli had further stated that the French Government suspected that this Turkish démarche had been made in connivance with Germany, inasmuch as it had coincided with a request of the German Government for authorization to establish a consular office in the Gezira District at a small town of the same name whose only conceivable interest would be in connection with possible petroleum developments.

Mr. Walker said that his interest in the matter lay in the fact that the Iraq Petroleum Company held exploration permits for the district now known as the Hatay, where the prospects for oil are reasonably good, and also for certain parts of the Gezira area, where the prospects are exceedingly favorable. He said that applications had been made to the Syrian Government to convert these permits into concessions, and that they had received the approval of the French High Commissioner in Beirut and are being supported by him with the administrations of Hatay and of Syria, respectively. Mr. Walker, fearful that Turkish influence

in

in the Hatay will prevent the granting of the concession in that district, and that Turkish aspirations in the Gezira may ultimately preclude the possibility of obtaining a concession in that area, stated that he had come to Ankara in the hope of finding opportunity to renew a proposal that the Turkish Government enter into arrangements with the Socony-Vacuum for the joint development of petroleum resources in Turkey, which would put his company and its associates in a favorable position with regard to the exploitation of these two areas in the event that they should come under Turkish control. He said, however, that he had been unable to find any satisfactory means of opening such a discussion with the Turkish authorities during the two days he had been in Ankara; for the oil policy of the Government is directed almost exclusively by the General Staff, and it is impossible to consult with any responsible member of that organization without giving advance notice in writing of the subject to be discussed - a step which he is not prepared to take, as the French authorities in Syria have stated that they would for political reasons have to withdraw their support of the Iraq Company's applications for the Hatay and Gezira concessions in case the support of Turkey were also to be sought. Until the concessions have been granted, therefore, the interested companies are not in a position to refer to them in any dealings with the Turks.

Mr. Walker asked that the Embassy follow the matter as closely as circumstances would permit, and that he be informed of any developments which might be of interest

to

to his Company. He feels that M. Massigli, when he arrives in Turkey, will be able personally to keep abreast of any further activities on the part of Turkey in this matter.

Mr. Walker remarked in conclusion that, should Turkey obtain control of the Gezira, not only would any permits or concessions which his Company might hold there at that time be jeopardized, but also the Haditha-Tripoli line of the Iraq Petroleum Company pipe line would come into dangerously close proximity to Turkey's extended border.

MacM

Copy sent to Istanbul.

JLB:MacM:mej

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
JAN 19 1939
absent
MR. BERLE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
JAN 17 1939
MR. MESSERSMITH

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Sva

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISER OF TECHNICAL RELATION
~~MR. DUNN~~
JAN 20 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

PA-19

January 14, 1939.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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JAN 27 1939
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UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
JAN 16 1939
MR. WELLES

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JAN 19 1939
File
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Welles

Mr. Messersmith

Mr. Berle absent

The attached despatch concerns the important subject of petroleum concessions in the Djezireh district of Syria between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, an area considered by some oil interests to offer better prospects for oil exploitation than even the rich Iraqi fields.

FW 767.90D/31

Note 890d.6363

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-M/C
JAN 23 1939
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

Reports have been received for several months that Turkish propaganda agents have been active in the Djezireh area and much has been said of the possibility that if France should grant independence to Syria, Turkey would seize control of this region, which, as will be observed from the accompanying map, constitutes approximately one-third of Syria.

not seen - LEL

Mr. A. V. Walker, an official of Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, has told our Embassy at Istanbul, in strict confidence, that a French Foreign Office official has confirmed to him a report that, during the recent crisis in Europe preceding the Munich conference, Turkey made oral demands upon France for administrative control in the Djezireh, as far south as an East-West line north of Deir Ez Zor, with particular reference to the administration of oil resources in the area. These representations are said to have been

followed

followed by a formal written demand during October. The latter is said to have been as formally refused by France, with the knowledge of Great Britain.

Since such demands would constitute a striking departure from Turkey's previous foreign policy of appeasement in the Near East and of respect for national frontiers (with the single exception of the Hatay dispute), the Embassy questions whether such a demand has actually been made.

Of particular interest is Mr. Walker's belief that the Turkish demands were supported by Germany. As grounds for this belief he points out that Germany recently applied for the right to establish a consulate in the Djezireh area, where the only possible German interests relate to oil. Turkey, no less than Germany, has been actively seeking petroleum resources for several years and neither of these countries has become reconciled to the fact that the Iraq concessions went to the Iraq Petroleum Company, owned in equal parts by British, French, Dutch and American interests.

It will be recalled that at the time of the Munich crisis the Turkish government received with some coolness the suggestion of President Roosevelt that telegrams be sent to Hitler and Benes recommending the continuation of their negotiations. The report that Germany was at that time supporting Turkish claims to the Djezireh may offer, if

true,

true, an explanation for this coolness.

The Iraq Petroleum Company now holds oil exploration permits covering the Djezireh and the Sanjak of Alexandretta and is attempting to convert these permits into oil concessions. (The Department's files indicate that the Syrian Government ceased issuing exploration permits in 1937 and that the Iraq Petroleum Company is the only company holding such oil permits in Syria at present.) Mr. Walker states that should Turkey gain control of the Djezireh the interests of the I. P. C. in that area would be jeopardized as they have already been jeopardized by Turkish administrative control of the Hatay.

890d.6363

Socony-Vacuum and the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey are the American participants in the Iraq Petroleum Company. Socony-Vacuum is now endeavoring to interest the Turkish Government in a plan for the joint development of petroleum resources in Turkey. Should these plans materialize, Socony-Vacuum would doubtless be in a stronger position to protect its interests in areas under Turkish administrative control.

867.6363

During 1937 the Gulf Oil Company of the United States manifested considerable interest in obtaining an oil concession in Syria but the Department has received no indication of a continuation of such interest since that time.

Territorial changes in the Near East have been frequently discussed in connection with the endeavors of Britain and France to liquidate their difficulties in Palestine and

Syria.

Syria. A union of Syria, Palestine and Trans-Jordan has been proposed. More recently, France has indicated an unwillingness to grant independence to Syria except under reservations designed to protect essential French interests. Conspicuous among these interests are the petroleum resources of the Djezireh and the Tripoli branch of the I. P. C. pipeline to the Mediterranean.

Wallace Murray

767.90D/31

NE GVA/KG

January 27 1939

CONFIDENTIAL - FOR STAFF USE ONLY

No. 345

To the American Minister Resident and Consul General,

Baghdad.

The Secretary of State transmits herewith, for the Legation's information, a copy of despatch no. 893 from the American Embassy at Ankara, dated December 10, 1938, regarding Turkish territorial aspirations in the Djezireh district of Syria. Any information which the Legation may be able discreetly to obtain regarding the subjects discussed in this despatch will be received with interest.

767.90D/31

Enclosure:

From Ankara, no. 893,
December 10, 1938.

767.90D/31

CR
JAN 25 1939

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A true copy of the signed original

WSM

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
MAR 3 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Istanbul, Turkey, January 26, 1939.

No. 950

Subject: Turkish Territorial Aspirations in the Gezira (Djezireh) District of Syria.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FEB 10 1939
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
MR. DUNN
FEB 14 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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1939 FEB 10 AM 11 43
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

FOR DISTRIBUTION - CHECK Yes No
To the Field

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FEB 14 1939
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to my strictly confidential despatch No. 893 of December 10, 1938, and to inform the Department in connection therewith that the semi-official news agency AGENCE ANATOLIE, with regard to a recent news item published in the LONDON DAILY HERALD concerning a statement said to have been made by Djemil Mardam, Prime Minister of Syria, upon his return to Damascus some two weeks ago, released the following statement to the press:

"Ankara, January 14, 1939 (A. A.).- An article published in the LONDON DAILY HERALD discusses a report from the Damascus correspondent of the Italian newspaper TRIBUNA to

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MAR 6 1939

867.90D/32

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the effect that Djemil Mardam, the Prime Minister of Syria, on his return to Damascus from Paris, stated that --

> 'The Government of Ankara has laid claim to the districts of Aleppo and of Gezira (Djezireh), and has requested that these districts be placed under Turkish mandate in order that Turkey may be enabled to remain neutral in the event of a war arising from the crisis of last September.'

"The AGENCE ANATOLIE is authorized to state that this report is without any foundation in fact."

Respectfully yours,

J. V. A. MacMURRAY.

Copy sent to American Embassy, London, England;
Copy sent to American Embassy, Paris, France;
Copy sent to American Embassy, Berlin, Germany;
Copy sent to American Legation, The Hague, Netherlands;
Copy sent to American Consulate General, Beirut, Syria.

863.6

JLB:g:er

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

767.90D/33

SEE 890d.927/97 FOR #197

FROM Beirut (Palmer) DATED Feb.3, 1939

TO NAME

1—1127 a.r.o.

REGARDING: Conditions in the Hatay.

Report on gradual detachment of the area from Syria and Turkification thereof.

Wi

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 976 Ankara, Turkey, March 1, 1939.

Subject: Turkish Territorial Aspirations in the Gezira (Djezireh) District of Syria.

DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
MAR 30 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
MR. DUNN
MAR 31 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAR 22 1939
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

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767.90D/34

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1939 MAR 21 PM 2 21
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U. S. I.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-M/E
APR - 3 1939
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

FILED
APR 5 - 1939

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

767.90d/31

Supplementing my despatch No. 893 of December 10 last, with which was enclosed a memorandum of a conversation with Mr. A. V. Walker, Manager for the Levant of the Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, I have the honor to report that I have found occasion to inquire of M. Massigli, who recently presented his letters accrediting him as French Ambassador here, as to the nature of the Turkish claims in the Gezira district of Syria. M. Massigli in general terms minimized the whole matter, which he described as a mere discussion

prompted

prompted in the first place by a German suggestion to the Turks that they might profit by a division of Syria which would give them the Gezira district and leave a free hand to Italy in the rest of Syria. He was quite reserved in discussing the matter, but in answer to my questions gave me to understand that the Turkish Government had not in fact made any communication or other formal démarche to the French Government, but that Bay Suad Davaz, the Turkish Ambassador in Paris, had "developed some ideas" on the subject in an informal way. I inquired particularly as to the basis of what Mr. Walker had described (in English) as a Turkish demand for "administrative control"; and he told me that there had been nothing in the conversations which could be so described or which suggested such an implied cession of Syrian territory. In conclusion, he stated that the Turkish authorities in Ankara had on several occasions assured him that they did not propose to make an issue of the question, and that he anticipated no difficulty in connection with it.

From the rather guarded comments of my French colleague, I am inclined to infer that questions of some sort concerning the Gezira region are in fact still under discussion between the Turkish and French Governments: but it would appear that, as intimated in my despatch of December 10, the report given me by Mr. Walker as to the character of the proposals made on behalf of Turkey has suffered from some doubtless unintentional distortion of meaning in the process of passing from one person to another.

I may add that, since sending my original despatch, I have endeavored, without success, to identify the place designated as Gezira at which the German Government was reported as having requested authorization to establish a consulate.

Respectfully yours,

J. V. A. MacMURRAY

Copies sent to:

American Embassy, London;
American Embassy, Paris;
American Embassy, Berlin;
American Legation, The Hague; and
American Consulate General, Beirut.

863.6

4 carbon copies
Received

MacM:KOS

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JR

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

Ankara

Dated March 28, 1939

FROM

Rec'd 2:25 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

24, March 28, 7 p.m.

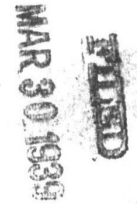
The election of the President and the Prime Minister of the Hatay as deputies of the new Turkish Grand National Assembly to meet on April third has given credibility to current rumors that the process of assimilation of the Hatay to Turkey will in the near future culminate in annexation by agreement with the French. This rumor is the more plausible because of the conspicuous acts of the French Embassy and the exceptional reticense of both French and Turkish officials concerned.

MACMURRAY

CSB

767.90d
note
890d.014
867.014

767.90D/35



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ankara, Turkey, March 15, 1939.

1939 APR 7 PM 3 47

No. 991

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
APR 8 - 1939
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Subject: Assimilation of the Hatay with Turkey.

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
MR. DUNN
APR 17 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

767.90 D/36

OFFICE OF THE ADVISER ON
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
MAY - 3 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-MAC
APR 18 1939
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF STATE

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

767.90d
note
890d.044

667.90d31/11

I have the honor to refer to my despatch No. 892 of December 7, 1938, relative to trade between Turkey and the H atay, and to inform the Department that the Turkish press during the past two months has reported a series of developments which indicate that steady progress is being made in the process of assimilating the new Hatay State with Turkey.

The Turkish press announced in January that the Turkish Government, in response to a request of the Government of the Hatay, had authorized the use in the Hatay of Turkish stamps with a surcharge. On January 31, the press reported that the Hatay Grand N ational Assembly had adopted the Turkish penal code, the only change being the substitution of "Hatay" and "Hatayan" for

"Turkey"

MAY 4 1939

"Turkey" and "Turk". It was subsequently stated that the Hatay was considering the adoption of a law in regard to criminal courts identical with that in force in Turkey. Announcement has been made of the formation of various organizations in the Hatay, such as the "Hatay Child Welfare Association", with the same organization and bylaws as similar institutions in Turkey.

The Turkish press of February 18 reported the passage of a law by the National Assembly of the Hatay adopting the laws of the Turkish Republic. The Ex ecutive Council was instructed to determine which laws were to be applied immediately and which required a period of adaptation. Following the passage of this law there was adopted by acclamation a motion to communicate to the Turkish Grand National Assembly the Hatay's unshakeable attachment to the mother country and its Great Chief.

More recently, the Turkish official news agency has reported the enactment of a law by the Hatay Grand National Assembly, making Turkish currency the official currency in the Hatay. It has also been announced in the press that Turkish citizens may enter the Hatay and Hatay citizens may enter Turkey without passports.

note
867.0128
890d.0128

Respectfully yours,

J. V. A. MacMURRAY.

710
RFK/rs

COPY TO CONSULATE GENERAL, BEIRUT.

COPY TO EMBASSY, PARIS.

LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Baghdad, Iraq, March 14, 1939.

No. 1256

Subject: Turkish Territorial Aspirations in the Djezireh District of Syria.

DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
APR 19 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Strictly Confidential

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1939 APR 14 PM 12 58

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
MR. DUNN
APR 19 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
APR 15 1939
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

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[redacted]

767.90D/37

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-M/C
APR 20 1939
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

FILED
MAY 3 1939

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Department's confidential instruction no. 345 of January 27, 1939, enclosing a report from Ambassador MacMurray of a conversation which he had with an official of the Socony-Vacuum Oil Company regarding Turkish territorial aspirations in the Djezireh district of Syria. According to the Ambassador's informant, the Turkish Government, during the most crucial period of the European crisis of September last, made oral representations to the French Government to the effect that it desired to be placed

in

in "administrative control" of this district as far south as Deir-ez-Zor, with particular reference to the administration of oil resources. The Ambassador's informant also reported that it was the feeling of the French Government that the Turkish claim would be renewed early this year and that the French Government suspected that Turkey had connived with Germany in its demands, inasmuch as they had coincided with a request of the German Government for authorization to establish a consular office in the Djezireh district. The Department, in transmitting this report, stated that any information which the Legation might be able discreetly to obtain would be received with interest.

As the only reliable source which I could approach with discretion was the British Ambassador, Sir Maurice Peterson, I asked him, in the course of a conversation on a number of subjects, whether he had any information concerning this matter. He replied in the affirmative, but said that the French had denied that such demands had been made by the Turks. I asked him whether he had heard that the Germans had requested permission to send a consul to the Djezireh. He said he hadn't, but that he had heard that the Turks had made such a demand to send a Turkish Consul there which had been refused. He said that his Government of course was interested in following the matter, but that no real developments had taken place with regard to possible Turkish encroachment in that area.

I may also in this same connection refer to the Department's instruction no. 340 of November 18, 1938, 890g.6363 T 84/615

with

with which was enclosed for the Legation's confidential information a copy of a letter from Mr. H.L. Seidel, a director of the Iraq Petroleum Company, Ltd., of London, addressed to Mr. Orville Harden of New York, regarding alleged Turkish activity in the Djezireh district as well as in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. The Department, in transmitting this letter requested me to report to it my observations on the subjects therein discussed.

It is of interest to note that Mr. Seidel reported that he had reason to believe that the Turkish claims would extend as far south as Abou Kemal--only a few miles from the Tripoli branch of the oil line--whereas Ambassador MacMurray's informant believed the claim would extend only as far south as Deir-ez-Zor. Whatever the actual facts are, it seems clear from Mr. Seidel's letter, from the information transmitted by Ambassador MacMurray, and from the report of Consul General Palmer at Beirut in his despatch no. 156 of November 25, 1938, that France was convinced that Turkey had designs on the Djezireh district. It will be recalled that Mr. Palmer reported on the authority of the French delegate at Damascus that the Turks were carrying on active propaganda in the Djezireh and that the French had taken active steps last October to maintain such control over this district as to prevent the development of a situation similar to that of the Sanjak of Alexandretta.

890d.00/759

Moreover, I am personally convinced that the French Government decided not to ratify the treaty of alliance with Syria because of the Turkish threats.

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In fact, if I am not mistaken, the French announced publicly in general terms that this decision had been made for the protection of the Syrians themselves. I am also convinced that the French officials in Syria must have informed the Syrian leaders of the real situation, for otherwise my long experience in Syria leads me to believe that the announcement of the French decision would have led to a serious revolt against the French, whereas the demonstrations which were held in Damascus seem to have been of relatively minor importance.

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I brought up this point in my conversation with the British Ambassador. Sir Maurice gave it as his opimion that the French would have been better advised to have ratified the treaty and to have defended Syria as an ally. This opinion is of special interest in view of the belief held in some quarters that the British Government persuaded or at least encouraged the French Government not to ratify the treaty because of the British position in Palestine.

Mr. Seidel also made some interesting comments as to the size of the Turkish army as contrasted with the French and British forces stationed in Syria and Palestine respectively which might conceivably oppose the Turkish army. I may state that the forces available in Iraq would not be of much additional assistance, as there are not more than two thousand officers and airmen at the cantonment of the British Royal Air Force at Habbaniyah, and the Iraqi army is not believed to have more than 20,000 effectives.

890g.20

Mr. Seidel's observation that many Iraqi officials

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were educated in Turkish schools and brought up under the Turkish regime and are consequently friendly to Turkey is of course to a certain extent true, so far as concerns the older members of the Iraqi Government. Most of these, however, took part in the Arab revolt against Turkey and would be extremely upset at the Turkish occupation of the Djezireh district, as the next step would almost inevitably be the attempted occupation of Mosul and northern Iraq by Turkey--a still greater threat of course to the Iraq Petroleum Company, whose great field is located near Kirkuk. It is perhaps possible that in Syria, if a choice of overlords between the French and Turks had to be made, some Syrians might choose the latter. Personally, my service in Syria makes me believe that if they had to choose they would prefer the French. I do not believe that the Iraqis, who have already been granted their independence, would desire to have the Turks regain a dominant position in Iraq. Much as they may dislike the British in many ways, most of those in responsible positions feel, I am sure, that the latter are more valuable to them as allies.

890J.01

Should any further information on this important subject come to my attention I shall of course not fail to report it.

Respectfully yours,

P. Knabenshue

File no. 715/863.6
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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 1019 Ankara, April 5, 1939.

Subject: Possible Annexation of the Hatay Region by Turkey.

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767.90D/38

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

767.90d/35

Supplementing my telegram No. 24 of March 28, 7 p.m., and referring to the Department's mail instruction No. 362 890d.927/102
of March 21 last, I have the honor to enclose herewith a memorandum of a conversation with the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs in which, although speaking rather jocularly and in indefinite terms, he seemed quite clearly to confirm the reported intention of the Turkish Government to annex the Hatay region in the near future.

1/

Enclosure:
Memorandum of conversation.

Respectfully yours,

J. V. A. MacMURRAY

Copy sent to American Embassy, Paris.
Copy sent to American Consulate General, Beirut.

710
MacM:KOS

FILED
MAY 8 1939
N/C

Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 1019 , dated April 5, 1939, from the American Embassy at Ankara, Turkey.

Ankara, April 5, 1939.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Possible Annexation of the Hatay Region by Turkey.

PARTICIPANTS: H. E. Şükrü Saracoglu,
Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs;

Mr. Julian E. Gillespie,
Commercial Attaché,
American Embassy; and

The Ambassador.

PLACE AND DATE OF CONVERSATION: American Embassy, Ankara, April 4, 1939.

In the course of a luncheon given at the Embassy in celebration of the conclusion of the Turco-American Trade Agreement, there was considerable badinage between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Gillespie, in the course of which the latter remarked that annexations were in order in these days, and asked whether there would be any opening for the appointment of an American diplomatic representative in the Hatay to compensate for the posts we had lost at Vienna and Prague. The Minister said that he could give no assurance of that. I then asked him whether, if I were to arrange for my concurrent appointment as Ambassador to the Hatay, there would be time for me to make a visit there in my official capacity while the post still existed; to which he answered that he did not think that such an arrangement could be made in time.

MacM.

Copy sent to Istanbul.

MacM:KOS

Central File: Decimal File 767.90D, Political Relations Of States, Relations; Bi-Lateral Treaties., Turkey And Syria, Feb. 20, 1931 - April 5, 1939. February 20, 1931 - April 5, 1939. MS Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States: Records of the U.S. Department of State, 1930-1944: Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations of Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States, 1930-1939. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5111394454%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 21 June 2025.